

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Jina Ragland, NE Department of Insurance
(402) 471-4506

Glaucoma Screenings Available Through Medicare

The month of January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month, and the Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) is encouraging Nebraska's Medicare beneficiaries to take advantage of glaucoma screenings available through Medicare.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S., affecting nearly 3 million Americans. Because the disease often progresses without symptoms, it is estimated that up to one-half of people with the disease do not even know they have it.

"With glaucoma, by the time a problem is noticed, permanent damage may have already occurred," said Jina Ragland, Director of the Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP). "With early detection and treatment, however, blindness may be prevented."

Medicare covers annual glaucoma screenings for the following groups of people considered to be at high risk for the disease: individuals with diabetes; individuals with a family history of glaucoma; African Americans over the age of 50; and Hispanic Americans over 65 years of age.

Medicare will pay for these glaucoma screenings when they are furnished by or under the direct supervision in the office setting of an ophthalmologist or optometrist, legally authorized to perform these services under state law. The beneficiary will pay 20% as the co-payment or coinsurance after meeting the yearly Part B deductible.

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For more information on glaucoma screenings, or any of Medicare's other preventive benefits, contact SHIIP at 1-800-234-7119 or Medicare at 1-800-633-4227 or visit www.doi.ne.gov/shiip on the web.

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The Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) is part of a national network, funded by a grant from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, that offers unbiased counseling and educational services designed to help senior citizens and those with disabilities make informed decisions on topics related to health insurance. With over 200 volunteers across the state, the Nebraska SHIIP is coordinated within the Nebraska Department of Insurance.